

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 204548 TOSEC 100231

61

ORIGIN PA-02

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 PRS-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00

CCO-00 /029 R

DRAFTED BY PA/M:JCHAMBERLAIN:BJM

APPROVED BY PA/M:WDYESS

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P 272246Z AUG 75 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, XF, PFOR

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHINGTON STAR EDITORIAL, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, TITLED "SENTINELS--OR HOSTAGES?"

2. THE FRAGILITY OF ANY MIDDLE EAST ACCORD BROKERED BY DR. HENRY KISSINGER THIS WEEK IS ALL TOO PALPABLE, ON ALMOST ANY LINE OF REASONING. THAT THE ISRAELIS WANT ITS TERMS TO BE TRUMPETED TO THE WORLD, WHILE THE EGYPTIANS PREFER SILENCE AND SIGN LANGUAGE, IS ONE TROUBLING FACT.

3. ANOTHER, AND MORE TROUBLING FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, IS THAT SEVERAL U.S. SENATORS WHOSE ASSENT IS CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ARRANGEMENT ARE DISTURBED, AS WE ARE, BY THE PROPOSAL TO STATION AMERICAN "VOLUNTEERS" IN THE SINAI MOUNTAIN PASSES, WHERE THEY WOULD MONITOR FORCE LEVELS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE LINES.

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PAGE 02 STATE 204548 TOSEC 100231

4. SEN. HENRY JACKSON HAS "RESERVATIONS." SEN. MIKE MANSFIELD ADMITTED, IN A RECENT INTERVIEW, THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF AMERICANS AS SENTINELS EVOKES, FOR HIM, UNPLEASANT MEMORIES OF THE ROAD TO VIETNAM.

5. CONSIDERING THE ENORMOUS STAKES, AND CONSIDERING THAT NO PEACE ARRANGEMENT IS LIKELY TO BE RISKLESS, NO SENATOR COULD HUNGER FOR THE ROLE OF A HENRY CABOT LODGE SR. HENCE, THE NATURE OF THIS AMERICAN "COMMITMENT" WILL HAVE TO BE EXPLAINED VERY CAREFULLY TO CONGRESS BEFORE THE CHECK NEGOTIATED BY DR. KISSINGER THIS WEEK CAN BE CASHED OR EVEN COUNTERSIGNED. CONGRESS WILL WANT TO ASSURE ITSELF THAT THE USE OF AMERICANS TO MAN ELECTRONIC SENSOR EQUIPMENT IN THE SINAI IS NOT, IN ALL BUT NAME, A BACKDOOR VERSION OF THOSE TRICKY AMERICAN "GUARANTEES" OFTEN MENTIONED BUT NEVER REALLY DEFINED IN TALK OF MID-EAST SETTLEMENTS.

6. THE USEFULNESS OF SUCH GUARANTEES CANNOT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND SIMPLY BECAUSE OTHER SUCH COMMITMENTS, OF INFINITELY LESS IMPORTANCE, HAVE GONE SOUR. IN A NOTABLE FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARTICLE LAST JANUARY, PROF. RICHARD ULLMANN OF PRINCETON MADE AN IMPRESSIVE CASE THAT SINCE THE UNITED STATES HAS, AND IS ACKNOWLEDGED TO HAVE, AN IMPLICIT COMMITMENT TO THE SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL, THERE ARE ON BALANCE FEWER DANGERS IN OUTRIGHT DECLARATION OF THAT COMMITMENT THAN IN AMBIGUITY.

7. "IF THERE EVER WERE A POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH CRIED OUT FOR MEASURES TO REDUCE AMBIGUITY," PROFESSOR ULLMANN WROTE, "IT IS THE PRESENT STAGE OF CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE RELATIVELY AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF THE PRESENT AMERICAN COMMITMENT ENCOURAGES THE PALESTINIANS ALONG THE ROAD OF IRREDENTISM...IT INDUCES ISRAELI MILITARY LEADERS AND POLITICIANS ALIKE TO THINK IN TERMS OF WORST-CASE SCENARIOS, AND THEREFORE NOT TO MAKE THE SORT OF TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS WHICH WILL BE SO VITALLY NECESSARY IF A GENUINE END TO HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS EVER TO COME..."

8. THAT IS A POWERFUL LINE OF REASONING. AND IT MAY
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 204548 TOSEC 100231

ULTIMATELY COMMEND ITSELF AS THE MOST SENSIBLE FOUNDATION FOR A DECLARATION OF AMERICAN COMMITMENT. BUT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES TO BEAR IN MIND. TO TALK OF ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL IS NOT TO SPEAK OF PLACING AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN THE SINAI. WHAT BOTHERS US MOST ABOUT THE REPORTED TERMS UNDER NEGOTIATION THIS WEEK IS THAT CONGRESS MAY FIND ITSELF, AGAIN, IN THE POSITION OF ENDORSING STEPS SHORT OF A POLICY THAT ACTUALLY HAVE THE FORCE AND EFFECT OF A POLICY.

9. CERTAINLY IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE WHY AMERICANS THEMSELVES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE FOUR SENSING STATIONS

EXCEPT AS, IN A MEASURE, HOSTAGES TO THE SUCCESS OF THE
WITHDRAWAL. OF COURSE, IT WILL BE ARGUED THAT THE NUMBERS
ARE SMALL--ESTIMATES RANGE FROM 100 TO 200 PERSONNEL--
AND THAT IN ANY EVENT THESE "VOLUNTEERS" COULD BE
SPEEDILY WITHDRAWN IN THE EVENT OF TROUBLE. BUT IF THE
ISRAELIS REALLY EXPECTED THAT DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND
UNCERTAINTY, THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE RELUCTANT TO
SURRENDER THE STRATEGIC POSITIONS THEY ARE PREPARING TO
YIELD TO EGYPTIAN REPOSSESSION.

10. WE TRUST, IN ANY CASE, THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAS
CAUTIONED BOTH PARTIES THAT THE MONITORING ARRANGEMENT
MAY BECOME FUEL FOR DEBATE, EVEN DEMAGOGUERY, BEFORE
CONGRESS AGREES TO IT. AND WE TRUST THAT DR. KISSINGER
IS READY TO EXPLAIN, TO THE SATISFACTION OF SKITTISH
SKEPTICS, WHY THE POSTING OF AMERICANS IN THE MIDEAST
POSES NO DANGER OF A SUBTLE "COMMITMENT" TO BE REPENTED
IN ANGUISH.

11. IN THE DEBATE THAT SEEMS TO BE BREWING UP, THE
DISTINCTION BETWEEN VOLUNTEER SENTINELS AND TECHNICIANS,
ON THE ONE HAND, AND HOSTAGES TO THE UNSTABLE SHIFTS OF
FORTUNE IN THE MIDEAST ON THE OTHER, WILL NEED TO BE
CONVINCINGLY EXPLAINED. OTHERWISE, THE SECRETARY'S
LATEST EFFORT AS AN HONEST BROKER MAY COLLAPSE ON THE
HOME FRONT. (END TEXT)
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, TOSEC, MINISTERIAL VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE204548
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: PA/M:JCHAMBERLAIN:BJM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750297-0327
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t197508102/baaaatio.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN PA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 Sep 2003 by MorefiRH>; APPROVED <07 JAN 2004 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, XF
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006